

The World Health Organization predicts that by 2050 nearly 2.5 billion people worldwide will have some degree of hearing loss. While there are a variety of factors which lead to this prediction, a major contributor is the immense number of people who work in environments with dangerously high levels of noise. With an estimated 11 million people currently working in noisy environments across Canada, the risk of debilitating hearing loss is a nationally important problem.

Accordingly, governments have passed laws which limit the levels of noise workers are allowed to be exposed to. Part 12 of the Manitoba Workplace Safety and Health Regulations and Part 7 of the Canada Occupational Health and Safety Regulations lay out the rules for noise exposure in the workplace for employers who fall under provincial and federal jurisdiction respectively. These sections detail the maximum exposure levels for workers, when noise testing is required, and the parameters surround the implementation of control measures.

Compliance with legislation isn't the only thing employers need to be aware of when it comes to workplace noise. Individuals who experience hearing loss due to the noise levels in their current or past workplaces may be eligible to make a claim with WCB. Because hearing loss can take years to manifest, a successful workers compensation claim can be made years after an employee has left an organization.

The implications of this are substantial for employers in transportation. Long-term exposure to noise is the fourth most common type of claim across the industry and accounts for around 5% of all claims in any given year. These claims impact the premiums employers pay to WCB, meaning hearing related injuries directly cost employers in transportation thousands of dollars every year.

What can you do to prevent hearing loss in your workplace? A good first step is to measure the levels of noise in your workplace to see if dangerous levels exist in your workplace. Another great practice is to conduct a noise specific hazard assessment of the workplace. Initiatives which seek to actively identify the elements of the workplace which produce the most intense levels of sounds is a great opportunity to control hazardous tasks and environments before they lead to a hearing injury. Noise intense activities and environments present the same levels of risk that other kinds of injuries do and should be controlled in the same way.

Find more information regarding noise hazards and hearing loss in the links below:

- [World Health Organization article on hearing loss](#)
- [Statistics Canada study on hearing loss](#)
- [Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety information on noise](#)
- [WCB MB policy on noise-induced hearing loss](#)

Do you need more information? RPM can help!

If you want access to industry leading sampling equipment, consider contacting RPM to take advantage of their noise study program. The program utilizes state of the art dosimetry equipment to analyze the sound metrics which are present in your workplace. Contact your RPM advisor for more information.

RPM also offers the course *Hazard Identification & Risk Control*, which provides students with the practical knowledge necessary to identify, assess and control the hazardous elements of their workplace so they can do their part in preventing dangerous incidents. Please note RPM courses are offered to RPM registered companies only. Your company must be registered with RPM and be in the process of working towards certification or must have achieved the SAFE Work Manitoba Trucking Certificate of Recognition. Not yet registered in the RPM program? Today is a great day to get started!



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